Vol. VIII. Numb. 97

THE OBSERVATOR.

On a Letter from a Gentleman about a State-Lottery, and the Advantages which may accrue from it to the Publick, and to private Persons and Societies, now that the Parliament have provided Funds. A Letter from another about Methods how to prevent Frauds, and the Practices of ill People, to make the Tax on Windows come short. All humbly submitted to the Legislature.

From Saturday, December 31. to Wednesday, January 4. 1709.

Country-m. HERE's a Letter from a worthy Gentleman, who has sent you several that have been of very good Use, Master. I must pray you to give him an Answer.

Obs. I own the Publick has been oblig'd to that Gentleman, *Roger*, for many useful Hints, and wish we had more such publick-spirited Men, that would be at the Pains to communicate their Thoughts for the Advantage of the Nation, when most People seem to be so full of their own private Views, or so swallow'd up in a Spirit of Trifling, that serious and useful Things meet with little or no Acceptance. We never had any Thing trifling from him, *Roger*; therefore pray tell me in short what it is he now proposes.

Country-m. He expresses his Satisfaction, Master, with what you said during the last Session of Parliament, about our State-Lotteries, and desires your Thoughts now about that Matter, since our August Representatives have agreed on proper Funds; upon which, he says People are making Preparations, some their 1000, some 500, and others 100, 50, and 10 *l.* a Piece, according to their Abilities.

Obs. 'Tis certainly the Wisdom of our Legislature, *Roger*, to encourage Peoples Zeal for the Publick, by a Prospect of private Advantage, since the Weakness of Mankind is such, that the latter has always, carry'd or at least carries for most Part the greatest Sway.

Country-m. The Gentleman says, Master, he meets with several honest well-meaning People, who make a Scruple of Conscience to put Things to the Lot, and therefore say they will not be concern'd. He adds, that this scrupulous Humour is nourish'd and encourag'd by such as are Enemies to the Government, who transform themselves into all Shapes, that they may improve every Opportunity of hindering the War to be carry'd on with Vigor and Success.

Obs. I am satisfy'd there's a great deal of Truth in what the Gentleman says, *Roger*, but hope honest People will be aware of such Charmers, who us'd formerly to upbraid the old Puritans with their Scrupulousness in Matter of Lotteries, and to make them the Subject of their Jest on that, as well as other Accounts. They may be satisfy'd, that 'tis not Tenderness in Point of Conscience, which those People, who have so manifestly broke through all Laws, divine and humane, design to encourage by their Dissuasives, but that it proceeds from their incurable Hatred to our Constitution, which they would attempt by Violence, as well as by Libels and railing Sermons, were it in their Power.

But to come closer to the Matter, *Roger*, Lotteries propos'd by the State, have no Manner of Resemblance to those Luxury Lotteries for Gaming and Diversion, against which the old Puritans so judiciously objected. The Difference is as great, as betwixt common profane Swearing, and taking an Oath lawfully impos'd by the Magistrate for putting an End to Strife, as the Apostle expresses it, *Heb.* 6. 16. for, as the former is a Crime, and a taking of God's Name in vain, for which the divine Legislator will hold no Man guiltless, but severely punish the Transgressors, the other is one of the highest Acts of Worship, when taken in Judgment, Truth, and Righteousness, and not to be refus'd, when legally requir'd. In like Manner, a Lottery propos'd to raise Money for Support of the Government in an expensive War against the common Enemy of our Religion and Liberty, may be lawfully comply'd with; for, as the End of this is good, and what every Subject is oblig'd to promote, according to their Capacity, there is no more Reason to scruple putting in Money to such a Lottery, on Prospect of Advantage, than there is to pray for the Government, or for our own particular Success in any Adventure or Partnership of Trade by Sea or Land, which every true Christian does as much submit to the divine Disposal, as when they cast Lots upon solemn Occasions. This takes off the great Objection from State-Lotteries, that the old Puritans rais'd against Luxury Lotteries, which they thought unlawful, because they could not, without profaning of God's Name, pray before the casting of such Lots, that had no other Design, but either Recreation, or a coveting what was their Neighbours, and because they never read of casting Lots in Scripture, but when Prayer preceded, as 'tis just it should when a Thing that can't be otherwise determin'd, is referr'd to the divine Determination.

Country-m. I think you have said enough, Master, to take off the Objection; therefore, if you please, I'll go on with the Advantages which the Gentleman says may result from such a Lottery. 1. That as the Ways of raising Money on Parliamentary Funds since the Revolution, to support a chargeable and bloody War against our common Enemy, has ty'd our money'd Men and Usurers by the Purse-Strings to the present Government, and the Protestant Succession, so this of a publick Lottery will engage every Body, even the meanest, as well as the middling Sort, who are the Sinews and Strength of a Nation, to the same Interest. 2. Considering the great Number and Wants of our Poor, which increase every Day, if the several Corporations and large Parishes in *Great Britain* and *Ireland* would but advance 10 *l.* a Piece, and put it into this Lottery, for their Poor, or for setting up of Work-houses, and purchasing Materials to employ them, who knows how favourable Providence may be to such a charitable Design, since they have their Chance for a Benefit-Ticket, as well as others, and according to the Proposals, they may, upon prompt Payment, have their Money again, and above 8 *per Cent. per Ann.* Compound-Interest? which is a better Improvement than they can well make of it otherwise. Besides, if they fail of a Benefit-Ticket, they receive their Money again, with near 6 *per Cent. per Ann.* Compound-Interest, according to the same Proposals.

Obs. I think the Gentleman argues very rationally; and if it be the Lot of any Parishes or Corporations to draw a considerable Benefit-Ticket, they ease themselves of the Burden of their Poor for ever; and not only so, but they may be thereby in a Capacity to set up Work-houses for employing many other Poor besides their own; so that I can't see how Parishes or Corporations can lay themselves, or venture their Money better, or with

a greater Proſpect of a Bleſſing, conſidering that the Cries of our Poor, for want of Employment and Bread, reaches Heaven, and pierces the Hearts of all piouſly-diſpos'd People.

Country-m. He adds, Maſter, that Corporations, Pariſhes, Counties, and other Communities, have likewiſe great Encouragement to venture Money into this Lottery, for mending the High-ways, building Bridges where they are wanting, paving their Streets, erecting or repairing publick Buildings, making Rivers navigable, cleanſing or repairing of Harbours, building or repairing of Churches and Meeting-houſes, or enlarging Benifices, where too ſmall for Miniſters, or for adding to the Incomes of the Hoſpitals of *Greenwich*, *Chelſea-College*, *Bedlam*, *Blue-coat-Hoſpital*, thoſe for the Sick and Lame, *&c.* or for helping Colleges, whoſe Fellowſhips are ſcant, for ſetting up of Charity-Schools, for the Benefit of poor Relations, or for relieving the poor *Palatines*; People ruin'd by Fire, ſhipwreck'd Sea-men, and ſuch poor Debtors as are ſtarv'd in Priſons, by the ſavage Cruelty of their Creditors.

Obſ. The Gentleman's Suggeſtions are both rational and charitable, *Roger*; and I wiſh our communicating them to the Publick, may have the deſir'd Succeſs.

Country-m. Here's a Letter from another Gentleman, Maſter, who is a ſincere Friend to the Government, and a Well-wiſher to all regular Methods that can be propos'd for raiſing Money to enable 'em to carry on the War with Vigor and Succeſs; but he is afraid that the Tax on Windows may in a great Meaſure be eluded by the Practices of diſaffected Perſons, becauſe it depends ſo much on the Judgment of the Commiſſioners, to determine which ſhall be call'd Windows, and which not; and that many People will ſtop up their preſent Windows, to avoid the Tax, which may make that Part of the Fund come ſhort; for we are not to doubt, but diſaffected People, of whom there are too many, will take this Method to avoid the Tax, and poor Tenants, tho' well enough affected, will be apt to follow their Example, and to liſten to their Objections, that this Tax is unequal in it ſelf, both with Reſpect to the Value of the Houſes, and the Ability of the Tenants, upon which this Tax muſt lie. To prove this, he alledges, that in *London* particularly, where the Houſes bear the higheſt Rent, as about the *Royal Exchange*, and other Places where there is moſt Trade, the Houſes have the feweſt Lights for want of Room, tho' they pay the greateſt Rents, and the Tenants are moſt wealthy; whereas, in the out Parts of the Town, the Houſes have more Windows, and the Tenants are leſs able, which will oblige them either to quit their Houſes, or to ſhut up as many of their Windows as they can.

Obſ. There's no Law ſo wiſely made, *Roger*, which ill Men will not find ſome Way or other to elude: But what Remedy does the Gentleman propoſe?

Country-m. Why, Maſter, he propoſes, with the utmoſt Deference to our Legiſlature, that they would think of ſuch Methods, as their Wiſdom ſhall ſuggeſt, to prevent the Practices of ill Men to make that Fund come ſhort; and he humbly ſuppoſes, that if Houſes had an additional Tax laid on them, according to the Proportion of their Rent, to be pay'd by the Tenants, it would obviate the Objection, prevent thoſe Frauds, be better ſuited to the Ability of the Poſſeſſors, more certainly anſwer the End, and raiſe more Money, if there were but an additional Tax of 4*d.* in the Pound, which would not be much felt, if laid upon Tenants of Houſes and Land. But all this with the utmoſt Submiſſion, Maſter.

Obſ. The Legiſlature are the beſt Judges of thoſe Things, *Roger*, and we are not to doubt but they will take all poſſible Care to obviate Frauds and Deficiencies.

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